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X-FACTOR
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In a society where mutants and former mutants alike feel threatened by the world around them, they turn to their first, best line of defense whenever trouble arises: X-Factor, the private detective agency founded by Madrox, the Multiple Man.

X-FACTOR

What happened last issue: Eighty years from now, Madrox, Layla and Ruby go to Detroit to speak with what's left of Victor Von Doom, possibly the only living person with enough time travel knowledge to explain who might be mucking with the timeline that leads to their future. In the meantime, Shatterstar, Rictor and Guido get into a major three-way–and not the fun kind–under the unkindly influence of the mysterious Cortex...who himself is disrupted by an emergency communique eighty years hence from presidential science advisor Anthony Falcone, thus inadvertently freeing Shatterstar from his control.

What happened in #44 that's relevant: You really didn't read #44 by this point? Seriously? Were you unable to get it because it sold out at your store? 'Cause we hear that's been happening a lot. You might want to think about asking your retailer to put aside a copy. Anyway...Cortex, the busy little beaver, managed to thoroughly insinuate himself into Monet's psyche thanks to her mental scan of Lenore's mother, has completely taken her over, and is endeavoring to dispose of the currently insensate Lenore, with only Darwin standing between the two of them.

Oh, and just to make those who remember when Peter first announced the birth of his daughter, Ariel, feel old: By the time you read this, she's graduated high school. For those far too young to remember that: Caroline has just graduated kindergarten. Remember that so that when you're reading a recap page twelve years from now, you can say, "Oh my God, where did the time go?" Then you'll know how Peter feels.

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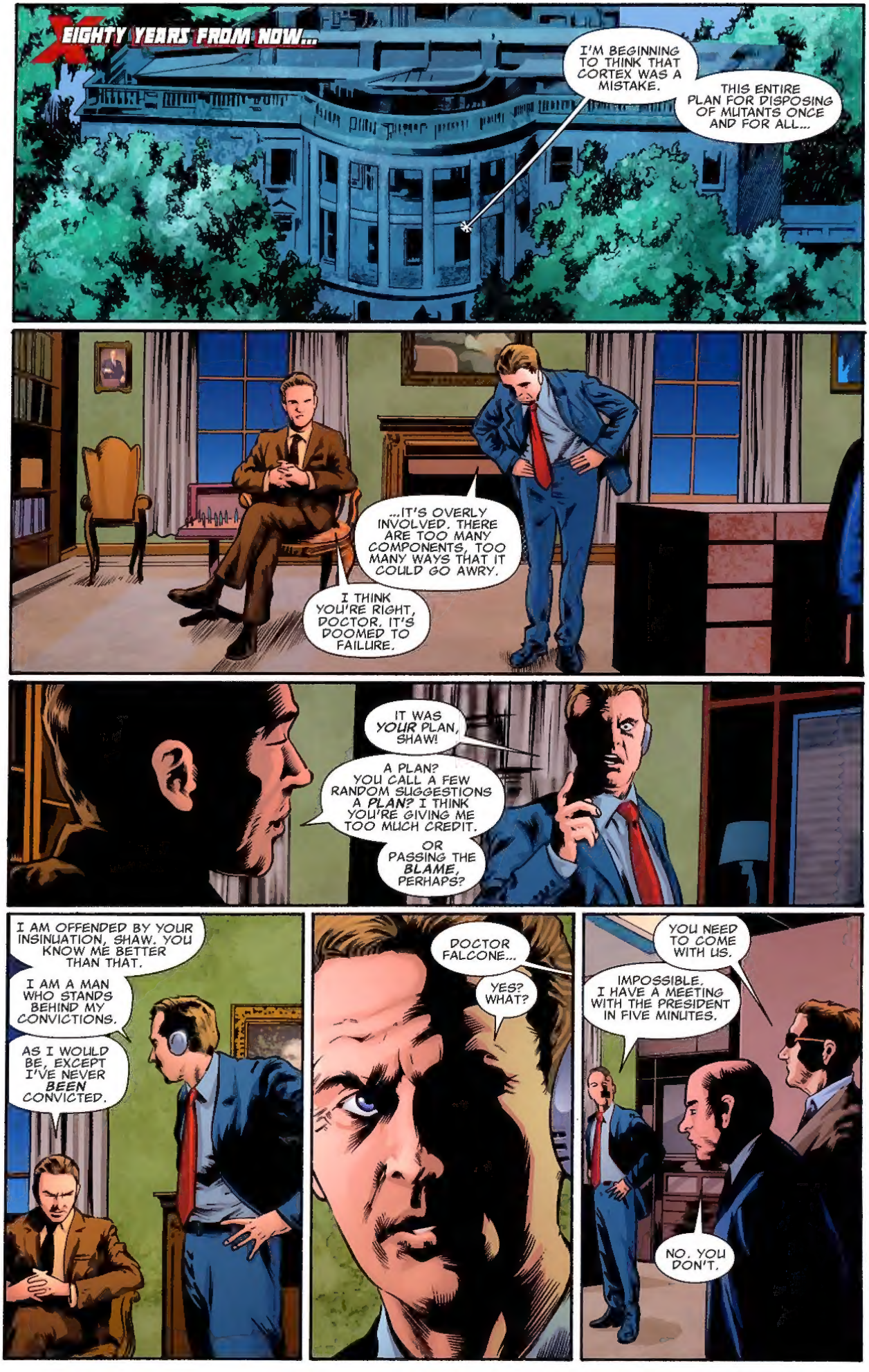
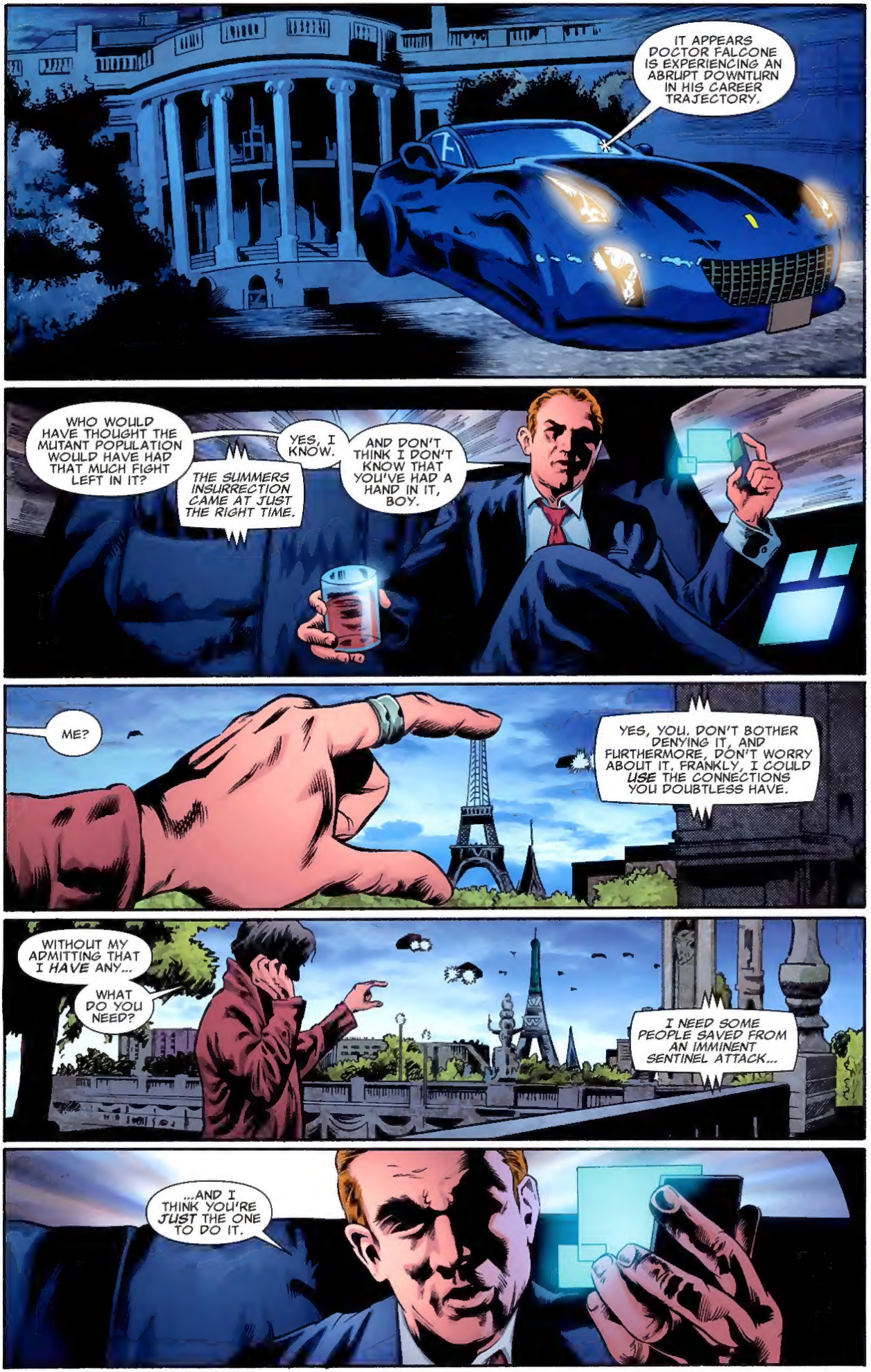
NOW...
I SAID YOU HAVE MY ATTENTION, FALCONE. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO DISPOSE OF JAMES MADROX. HOW COULD YOU FAIL TO DO THAT?
BY NOT KILLING HIM?
DON'T GET CUTE WITH ME.
ONE OF MY AVATARS SHOWED UP TO DISPOSE OF HIM, BUT HE HAD ALREADY VANISHED. I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE WENT.
APPARENTLY HE'S HERE, IN OUR TIME.
ALL RIGHT. NOW I KNOW.
HOW DID HE GET HERE?
THAT I DO NOT KNOW. SINCE YOU'RE THERE AND I'M HERE, YOU'RE IN A BETTER POSITION TO DETERMINE IT.
LISTEN, CORTEX...
NO. YOU LISTEN. YOU SENT ME TO DO A JOB. BECAUSE OF YOU SHOUTING IN MY HEAD, YOU JUST MADE IT A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT.
THANKS TO YOU, I LOST AN AVATAR.
SO REACQUIRE HIM.
MY HOLD ON HIM WAS TENUOUS AT BEST, THANKS TO HIS EXTRADIMENSIONAL NATURE. I'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY TO DISPOSE OF RICTOR. HE WAS LOW PRIORITY ANYWAY.

MATTERS OF GREATER IMPORTANCE ARE UNFOLDING. I'D BEST OVERSEE THOSE CLOSE-UP.
WHAT ABOUT MADROX?
IF HE'S IN YOUR TIME, THEN HE'S YOUR PROBLEM.
YOU NEED TO DO BETTER, CORTEX.
HOW WELL I DO WILL BE INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL TO THE AMOUNT THAT YOU SHOUT IN MY HEA--
HEY! FILTHY SQUABS.
SHOW SOME RESPECT FOR THE DEAD.
LIVING CREATURES. OPPORTUNISTIC AND DISGUSTING, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR KINGDOM OR SPECIES.
IF I STILL NUMBERED MYSELF AMONG THEM, I'D LIKELY KILL MYSELF.


EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT CORTEX WAS A MISTAKE.
THIS ENTIRE PLAN FOR DISPOSING OF MUTANTS ONCE AND FOR ALL...
...IT'S OVERLY INVOLVED. THERE ARE TOO MANY COMPONENTS, TOO MANY WAYS THAT IT COULD GO AWRY.
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT, DOCTOR. IT'S DOOMED TO FAILURE.
IT WAS *YOUR* PLAN, SHAW!
A PLAN? YOU CALL A FEW RANDOM SUGGESTIONS A *PLAN?* I THINK YOU'RE GIVING ME TOO MUCH CREDIT.
OR PASSING THE *BLAME*, PERHAPS?
I AM OFFENDED BY YOUR INSINUATION, SHAW. YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT.
I AM A MAN WHO STANDS BEHIND MY CONVICTIONS.
AS I WOULD BE, EXCEPT I'VE NEVER *BEEN* CONVICTED.
DOCTOR FALCONE...
YES? WHAT?
YOU NEED TO COME WITH US.
IMPOSSIBLE. I HAVE A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IN FIVE MINUTES.
NO. YOU DON'T.

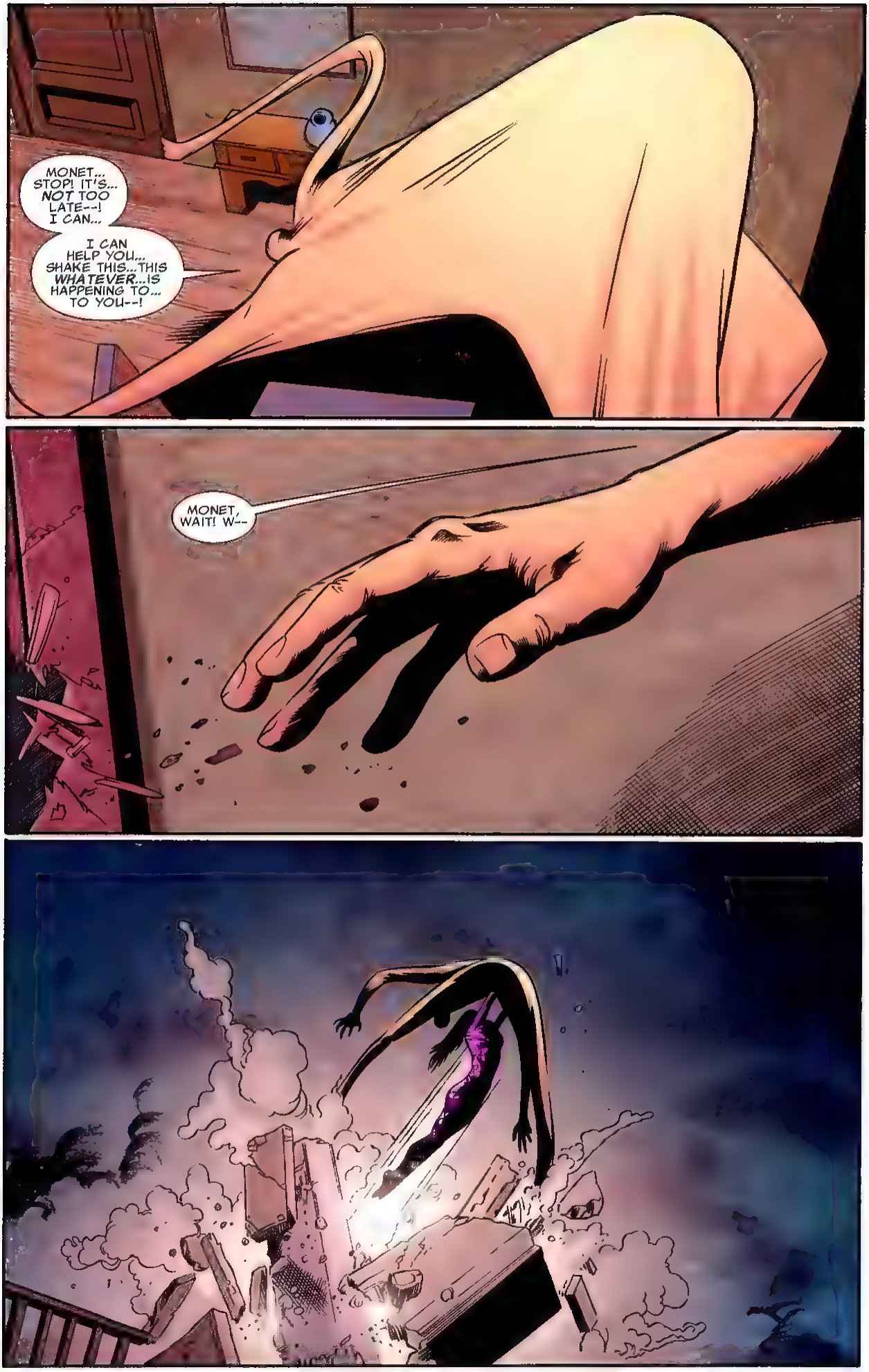
I SEE.
SHAW. IT APPEARS THAT THERE IS SOME TREMULOUSNESS IN THE WHITE HOUSE OVER THE SUMMERS REBELLION.
SCAPEGOATS ARE BEING SOUGHT. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO, DOCTOR?
HUNH.
CONNIE? I NEED TO GO INTO A MEETING WITH AN OLD FRIEND.
DID YOU SAY...?
YES. AN OLD FRIEND.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR. I'LL CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE.
THAT WOULD BE APPRECIATED. AND AFTER YOU'VE DONE THAT, TAKE THE REST OF THE DAY.
YES, SIR.
ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN. LEAD THE WAY.


IT APPEARS DOCTOR FALCONE IS EXPERIENCING AN ABRUPT DOWNTURN IN HIS CAREER TRAJECTORY.
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE MUTANT POPULATION WOULD HAVE HAD THAT MUCH FIGHT LEFT IN IT?
THE SUMMERS INSURRECTION CAME AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.
YES, I KNOW.
AND DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU'VE HAD A HAND IN IT, BOY.
ME?
YES, YOU. DON'T BOTHER DENYING IT, AND FURTHERMORE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. FRANKLY, I COULD *USE* THE CONNECTIONS YOU DOUBTLESS HAVE.
WITHOUT MY ADMITTING THAT I *HAVE* ANY...
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
I NEED SOME PEOPLE SAVED FROM AN IMMINENT SENTINEL ATTACK...
...AND I THINK YOU'RE *JUST* THE ONE TO DO IT.

NOW...
THIS COULD HAVE GONE A LOT EASIER FOR YOU, ARMANDO. IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.
YOU COULD HAVE HAD YOUR HEART'S DESIRE. I COULD HAVE DISPOSED OF LENORE. AND WE COULD HAVE PARTED FRIENDS.
BUT NO. YOU HAD TO GET IN THE WAY.
AND NOW...NOW IT'S GOING TO COST YOU.
X-IT STRATEGIES

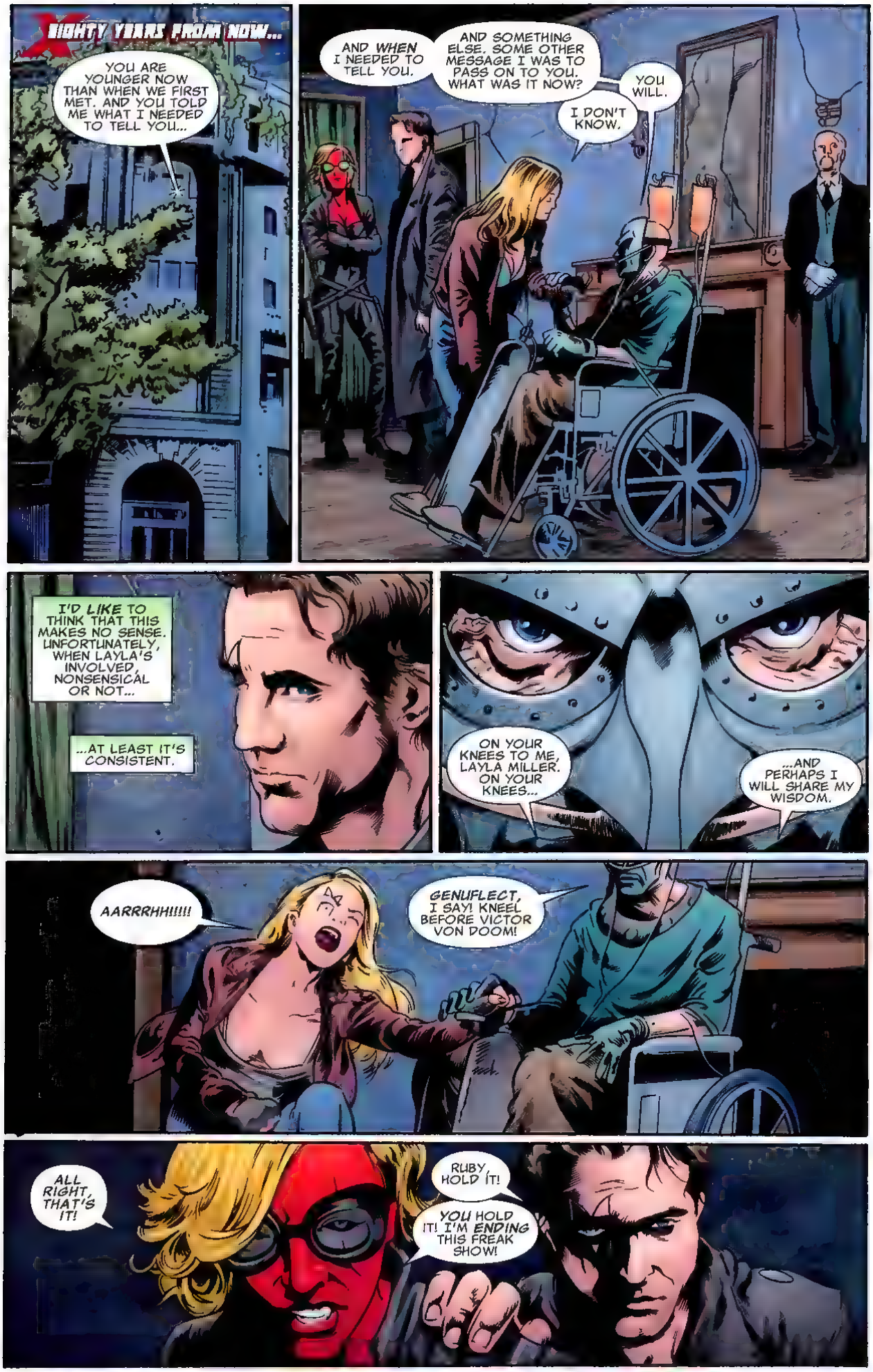
IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER, I'LL TRY TO DO THIS AS QUICKLY AS--
--WHAT?
STOP IT!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW RIDICULOUS YOU LOOK?
I CAN'T GET ANY SORT OF GRIP ON YOU! AND YOU'RE SLIMY BESIDES!
OKAY... NOW YOU'RE JUST...HURTING MY FEELINGS.
FINE. BE THAT WAY.
EVOLVE TO SURVIVE. SEE WHAT I CARE.
I HAVE A JOB TO DO.

SO DO I. AND THAT'S TO STOP YOU FROM DOING YOUR JOB.
AND IT'S NOT EVEN YOUR JOB. IT'S SOMETHING THAT SOMEBODY'S MAKING YOU DO.
STEP ASIDE, ARMANDO.
NO.
AND IF WE'RE GONNA DO THIS, I'D RATHER YOU NOT ACT LIKE YOU KNOW ME, WHOEVER OR WHATEVER YOU ARE.
IN OTHER WORDS, IT AIN'T ARMANDO TO YOU...
IT'S DARWIN!
NOT FOR LONG.
LNNNHHHH!
LENORE! GET OUT! RUN!!!!
ZZZZZZZZ


MONET... STOP! IT'S... NOT TOO LATE--! I CAN...
I CAN HELP YOU... SHAKE THIS...THIS WHATEVER...IS HAPPENING TO... TO YOU--!
MONET, WAIT! W--

HUH? WHAT--?
WHOA!
DARWIN! MONET!
WHERE ARE--
--YOU?
OH, THAT CAN'T BE GOOD.

MONET, STOP!
THAT WASN'T WHAT I--
--MEEEAAAANNNTTT...
THAT TOOK CARE OF THAT.
NOW--
--TO DISPOSE OF LENORE WILKINSON AND HER OFFSPRING...
...AND HER LITTLE DOG, TOO.


EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
YOU ARE YOUNGER NOW THAN WHEN WE FIRST MET. AND YOU TOLD ME WHAT I NEEDED TO TELL YOU...
AND WHEN I NEEDED TO TELL YOU.
AND SOMETHING ELSE. SOME OTHER MESSAGE I WAS TO PASS ON TO YOU. WHAT WAS IT NOW?
YOU WILL.
I DON'T KNOW.
I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT THIS MAKES NO SENSE. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN LAYLA'S INVOLVED, NONSENSICAL OR NOT...
...AT LEAST IT'S CONSISTENT.
ON YOUR KNEES TO ME, LAYLA MILLER. ON YOUR KNEES...
...AND PERHAPS I WILL SHARE MY WISDOM.
AARRRHH!!!!!
GENUFLECT, I SAY! KNEEL BEFORE VICTOR VON DOOM!
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S IT!
RUBY, HOLD IT!
YOU HOLD IT! I'M ENDING THIS FREAK SHOW!

LOOK AT HER HAND. LAYLA'S RIGHT HAND.
SHE'S OKAY. SEE?
VON DOOM'S, LIKE, 120 YEARS OLD. HE'S PROBABLY GOT THE UPPER BODY STRENGTH OF A DEAD FLOUNDER.
HE ONLY *THINKS* HE'S HURTING HER. LET HER PLAY ALONG.
THIS IS HOW YOU SHOW RESPECT FOR YOUR ELDERS.
Y-YES, DOCTOR. I'LL... I'LL REMEMBER. AND...DO YOU REMEMBER? WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW?
THE SECOND THING...VERY IMPORTANT. DAMNATION. WHAT WAS...
THE FIRST...?
WHAT ABOUT THE FIRST THING?
AH. DOOMLOCKS.
RICHARDS COULDN'T CREATE THEM. FORGE COULD NOT EVEN CONCEIVE OF THEM.
ONLY VON DOOM. *ONLY* VON DOOM.

"DOOMLOCKS?"
SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING AN EVIL BOB MARLEY WOULD WEAR.
BOB WHO?
THIS IS WHAT HELL IS LIKE. NOBODY GETS YOUR TOPICAL REFERENCES.
IF YOU WENT BACK IN TIME, KILLED HITLER, AND THEN RETURNED TO YOUR OWN TIME, NOTHING WOULD BE CHANGED, BECAUSE YOUR ACTION WOULD SIMPLY CREATE A DIVERGENT TIME STREAM...
YES, WE KNOW TH--
I WASN'T SPEAKING TO YOU.
INTERRUPT ME AGAIN, YOU DIE WHERE YOU STAND.
WHERE WAS I?
DIVERGENT TIME STREAM.
AH. YES.
UNLESS YOU HAD A CHRONAL VARIANCE INHIBITOR.
YOUR "DOOMLOCK".
YES. IF YOU POSSESS ONE, THEN YOUR ACTIONS WILL IMPACT THOSE OF YOUR OWN TIMELINE. YOU BECOME AN "INVARIABLE". ALL ACTIONS FLOW FROM YOU.

HOW DO I GET ONE OF THESE DOOMLOCKS? GET IT AND USE IT?
ARE YOU A CYBERNETIC ORGANISM?
NO.
THEN YOU CANNOT USE IT.
THE TECHNOLOGY HAS TO BE BONDED TO YOU. YOU HAVE TO BE MORE MACHINE THAN MAN.
OTHERWISE THE ENERGIES INVOLVED WOULD TEAR YOU A--
WAIT.
IT'S COMING TO ME.
WHAT IS?
THE OTHER THING I'M SUPPOSED TO REMEMBER.
NOTHING CAN THWART THE MIND OF DOOM.
IT'S COMING...IT'S ALMOST...
THIS IS INSANE. "DOOMLOCKS?" NEBULOUS WARNINGS?
AH. I REMEMBER NOW.
DUCK.

WE BARELY HAVE THE TIME TO PROCESS THAT SIMPLE WORD AND REALIZE IT DOESN'T RELATE TO FOWL.
THEN WE HIT THE DECK JUST AS THEY COME CRASHING IN.
WHAT "THEY" ARE, THOUGH, I'M NOT SURE. SENTINELS, DEFINITELY, BUT NOT THE BEHEMOTHS WE'RE USED TO.
I HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEY'RE ANY LESS DEADLY, THOUGH.

NOW...
DARWIN GAVE ME MORE TROUBLE THAN HE SHOULD HAVE. I WONDER IF MY AVATAR IS RESISTING MY KINDLY INFLUENCE.
YES. YES, I CAN FEEL HER ROOTING AROUND IN THERE. SHE'S NOT HAPPY.
APPARENTLY SHE HAS UNFOND MEMORIES OF BEING IN MENTAL THRALL TO OTHERS.
I'M NOT SURE IF, WHEN I'M DONE, I SHOULD SIMPLY VACATE THE PREMISES OR STICK AROUND TO SEE IF I CAN THOROUGHLY BREAK HER--
NOW WHAT?!?
SOMETHING HIT HER! HIT US!
WHAT FATES HAVE ALLIED TO PROTECT THIS ONE DAMNED GIRL? SHE HAS THE LUCK OF THE...
IRISH...

DON'T WORRY, MONET! WHOEVER'S DONE THIS TO YOU... WE'LL UNDO IT!
I'D WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF MORE THAN ME!
DARWIN MUST HAVE SUMMONED YOU. HOW DID YOU GET HERE SO FAST?
I WAS ALREADY EN ROUTE! I FIGURED OUT SOMETHING WAS WRONG!
HOW?
THERESA, HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT DARWIN MIGHT BE IN DANGER?
DON'T BE SILLY, VAL. MONET IS WITH HIM.
YEAH, MONET. WHO YOU SAID UNDERWENT SOME TYPE OF PSYCHIC ATTACK IN THE HOSPITAL...
...AND RIGHT AFTER THAT, COULDN'T WAIT TO BE ALONE WITH YOUR CLIENT. SO WHAT IF--?
OH MY GOD. I'M AN IDIOT.
I'M A DETECTIVE, MONET. IT'S WHAT WE DO.
REALLY. WELL...

I'M AN ASSASSIN! GUESS WHAT WE DO?
EEEEEEEEEEEEE
KEEP SCREAMING, SIRYN! BY ALL MEANS, KEEP SCREAMING!
TRUTH TO TELL...
...I DERIVE SOME DEEP AMUSEMENT WHEN I HEAR SCREAMS. PERHAPS IT'S THEIR SHEER USELESSNESS THAT I FIND...
WAIT... NOW WHAT'S GOING ON?

OMEGANOID SENTINELS?! THIS IS JUST MAKING--
--NO SENSE AT ALL!
TWO MUTANTS, IDENTIFIED FROM ARCHIVE RECORDS AS THERESA CASSIDY, DECEASED, AND MONET ST. CROIX, DECEASED.
SUBJECT ST. CROIX HAS ACQUIRED TECHNO-ORGANIC ATTRIBUTES AT VARIANCE WITH PREVIOUS FILES. UPDATE FILES...
FILES UPDATED. PROCEED WITH DESTRUCTION OF MUTANTS.
THIS IS LIKE AN ASSASSINATION UNDERTAKEN BY COMMITTEE. NO ONE'S CLEARING ANYTHING WITH ANYONE ELSE.
WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW...
WHERE DID THEY GO? RUBY? LAYLA--?
WASN'T ME.
I'VE GOT NOTHING.
IT WAS I WHO DID IT.
I'M BETTING IT WASN'T.
ACTUALLY... IT WAS ME. JUST WHIPPED UP ONE OF MY HANDY-DANDY PORTALS AND POOF, NO MORE PROBLEMS.
FITZ!
MY GOD! BABY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE LONG DEAD!
EVEN DEATH WOULDN'T KEEP ME FROM YOU, RUBES.
MADROX... THIS IS FITZ!
AS IN "ONE SIZE FITS ALL"?
AS IN TREVOR FITZROY, MATE. HOW YOU DOING?
F...FITZROY?
AS IN TOTALLY EVIL, MAJOR VILLAIN FROM THE FUTURE TREVOR FITZROY?
YUP. YOU A NEW RECRUIT TO THE REBELLION?
THE MORE, THE MERRIER, THAT'S WHAT I SAY.
ALL THE BETTER FOR BRINGING THE SUMMERS REBELLION TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.

NEXT ISSUE

DON'T FORGET: SEND US YOUR LETTERS TO OFFICEX@MARVEL.COM AND MARK THEM "OK TO PRINT"! THE LETTERS COLUMN RETURNS NEXT ISSUE, WITH PETER DAVID PERSONALLY ANSWERING YOUR MAIL! WE FORGOT HOW SOON AFTER LAST ISSUE THIS ONE CAME OUT, OR IT WOULD BE RIGHT HERE, BEFORE YOUR EYES...

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COVERS BY BRANDON PETERSON, MIKE CHOI & SONIA OBACK
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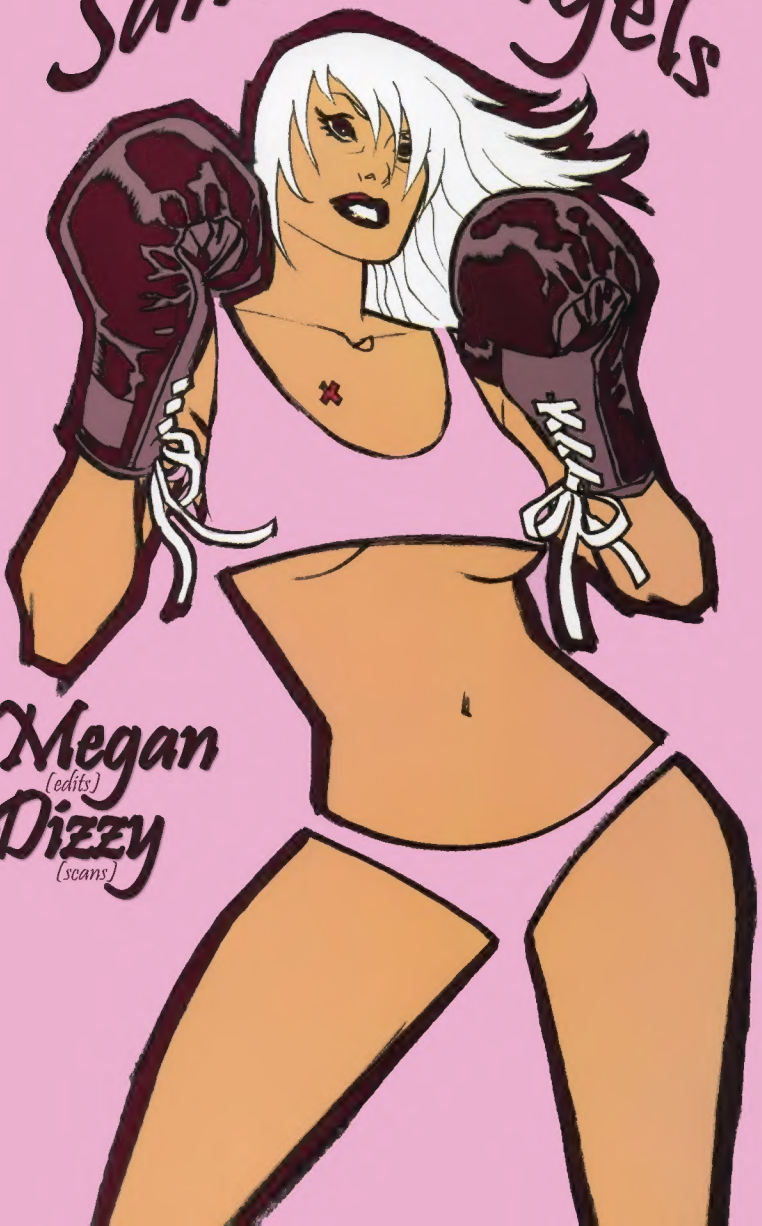

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